

called K-Rod, a VA employee at the medical center in Phoenix, Arizona—yes, that famous VA hospital—he has been threatened and harassed by the VA for speaking up about excessive wait times for vets to see doctors.

In October of 2016, the VA's inspector general released a report of misconduct on the Phoenix hospital based on information provided by Mr. Rodriguez. Mr. Rodriguez alleged that more than 90 veterans had been waiting over 400 days to see a doctor, 5 of whom died before they could see the doctor. These accusations are very disturbing.

But Mr. Rodriguez' discovery did not earn him a medal or a plaque, just threats and harassment by the VA. They even moved his desk to a closet.

There are many folks at the VA who genuinely care about our veterans in this country, like K-Rod, but there seems to be a culture problem at the VA that must be addressed from the top down.

Fix the problem rather than attack whistleblowers. No veteran should ever wait to see a doctor for over a year. That is shameful.

And that is just the way it is.

FULLY CODIFYING CIVIL RIGHTS PROTECTIONS FOR THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

(Mr. KENNEDY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I stand proudly today with my colleagues to reintroduce the Equality Act, a bill that would finally fully codify civil rights protections for the LGBTQ community.

It is unthinkable to me that this bill finds opposition in this Chamber, where we stand less than a mile from a sacred American promise that is etched in stone above the doors of the Supreme Court: "Equal justice under law." There is no asterisk. There is no condition or compromise. No caveat. It is a promise that is afforded to each of us; that no one—man, woman, political candidate, or President—can look us in the eye and say that you do not count or you are unworthy.

Some of the most shameful moments of our Nation's history have come when we have broken that promise, when we say that everyone matters except you. Every life counts except yours.

It is time for this body to take a stand and say everyone counts in this country today, on our watch today.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE IMPORTANT ROLE SMALL BUSINESSES PLAY IN OUR COMMUNITIES

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Small

Business Week to acknowledge the important role small businesses play in our communities nationwide. I am proud to be the product of a small-business family.

Small businesses are responsible for creating 63 percent of new jobs, and they employ more than 47 percent of the employees in the private sector.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is also marking the week with events hosted by the Small Business Development Center. From workshops to webinars, there is information for those looking to start a small business and those looking to grow their businesses. Even long-time small-business owners can get advice on how to continue to thrive or find a renewed sense of direction.

Pennsylvania Small Business Week recognizes the significant contributions of our small businesses and highlights the resources available to support their growth in the Keystone State.

The Nation has celebrated Small Business Week each year since 1963. I would like to congratulate all the small-business owners for the role they play in employing our neighbors, serving our communities, and creating two out of every three new jobs in the United States.

HONORING THE BROTHERS OF KAPPA ALPHA PSI

(Mr. LAWSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LAWSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, during their annual James "Biff" Carter Kappas on Capitol Hill Legislative Policy Conference.

Each year, donning their crimson blazers, they come to Capitol Hill to raise awareness around many of the key issues facing the African-American and other communities in this country.

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity represents over 150,000 members from all 50 states, several U.S. territories, and six countries around the globe. These distinguished men of achievement are leaders in their respected communities, in the boardrooms, classrooms and academia, public service, and every field of human endeavor.

Today, it is with great humility and commitment to improving our communities that my brothers in the bond come to Washington for the Kappas on Capitol Hill Legislative Policy Conference.

As I see the brothers in their red blazers walk these hallowed halls, bringing their professional expertise, wisdom gained through experience, and passion for their communities to Washington, my heart beams with pride.

Mr. Speaker, now, more than ever, we need leaders in our communities to raise their voices to raise awareness about the issues that are confronting our communities back home. Today, I

am proud of my brothers in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, for coming to Congress today to ensure that we never forget how decisions on issues like health care, higher education, job creation, and veteran benefits are affecting our communities at home.

RECOGNIZING 93Q MORNING DJ KEVIN KLINE

(Mr. OLSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I have had many heroes since I moved to Houston: Neil Armstrong, Earl Campbell, Nolan Ryan. My newest hero is a good friend, 93Q morning disc jockey Kevin Kline.

Kevin and his wife, Trish, have watched a teenage friend, Chelsey, die from cancer. They turned that pain into extreme good. They started the Snowdrop Foundation to stop kids dying from cancer like Chelsey. They have used long runs to raise over \$1 million for Snowdrop.

Movie hero Forrest Gump ran for 3 years, 2 months, and 15 days. Recently in Italy, our real-life hero Kevin ran for 178.5 miles in 47 hours and 28 minutes.

Naval aviators are given call signs. Tom Cruise was Maverick. I was Pistol. By the powers vested in me by the 93Q's Tim Tuttle and Erica Rico, Kevin Kline's on-air call sign is now and forever Gump Man.

I hope Gump Man is smiling. I know Chelsey and her friends are smiling in heaven.

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NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH FUNDING

(Mrs. DAVIS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, recently I met with leaders of the San Diego medical research community who had a unified message: We need to end the cuts in research that have slowed medical innovation for the last decade.

This year I was proud to lead the bipartisan effort, along with over 200 of my colleagues, to push for an additional \$2 billion in funding for the National Institutes of Health.

This is a very personal issue. Almost all of us know someone who is struggling with a disease where NIH funding is used to find a cure. That person could be a mother, father, family friend, or even more heart-wrenching, a child.

I am thrilled that the spending bill before us this week avoids the cuts proposed by President Trump and actually increases NIH funding by \$2 billion. We have seen what can happen when leadership takes a bipartisan approach: top priorities like medical research actually get funded.

This isn't the bill that I would have written, but it is a compromise that I am very happy to vote for. Let's hope that Speaker RYAN has learned from this experience and will work with us on health care, on transportation, and other priorities moving forward.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR JOHN JACOBSON

(Mr. BYRNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of a true American hero, a dedicated veteran, and a successful businessman.

Major John Jacobson enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1940 and fought in World War II, where he served as quartermaster to General George Patton.

After his military career, he moved to Kansas and built a Fortune 500 company and became a leader in the meat-packing industry.

After retiring and moving to coastal Alabama in 1999, Major Jacobson became a local celebrity. Mr. Jack, as he was affectionately known, spent much of his time working with local veterans organizations where he would speak with school groups about World War II and the sacrifice our veterans make.

Sadly, he recently passed away at the age of 106, making him one of the country's oldest World War II veterans.

Mr. Speaker, all you need to know about Major Jacobson is that he lived his life by a simple motto: Another day to live is another day to serve.

To his family, thank you for sharing Mr. Jack with all of us. He made our community, the United States, and the world a better place.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL

(Mr. DEUTCH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 69th anniversary of the founding of the modern State of Israel. Like our own country, our friend and ally has a deep commitment to meeting human needs around the world.

Throughout its history, Israel has been a leader in humanitarian assistance. Israel established the very first field hospital in Haiti after the devastating earthquake in 2010 and rebuilt villages ravaged by cyclones in Fiji. Israel sent over 100 tons of supplies to aid Indonesia and Sri Lanka after the 2004 tsunami, and dispatched doctors to Greece to care for refugees fleeing the horrors of war in Syria.

When Israeli soldiers reported wounded Syrians arriving at their border, medics from the Israeli military were dispatched and over 3,000 Syrians were treated by Israeli doctors.

Today, as we celebrate Israel's proud history and the bond between our na-

tions, we are reminded of the importance of looking beyond our own borders and our proud shared history of welcoming those fleeing persecution from all around the globe. We renew our shared commitment to helping those in need in every corner of the world.

COMMUNITY BANKS: THE HUB OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

(Mr. ARRINGTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, community banks are an integral part of Main Street America, making up over 50 percent of banks and rural communities like the ones I represent. They are indeed the hub of economic activity for west Texas. They employ nearly 20,000 folks in my district and provide vital services to families, small businesses, and ag producers.

Why in the world do we want to hamstring them with onerous and unnecessary regulations that make it harder for them to serve their communities?

That is exactly what I believe we have done with Dodd-Frank.

Each day that goes by, another community bank goes out of business. As many of my colleagues have pointed out, Dodd-Frank didn't end too big to fail, but it did create too small to succeed.

Dodd-Frank didn't protect consumers. It created new layers of bureaucracy, paperwork, confusion, and limited services for consumers.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that Congress act on this opportunity to pass the CHOICE Act before it is too late for our community banks and for our rural communities to choose between relationship banking and transactional banking.

COMBATING OPIOID CRISIS

(Ms. TSONGAS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Speaker, Police Chief William Taylor of my hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts, said:

"Each day two to three people overdose from opioids in Lowell. . . . The introduction of illicit fentanyl has been the game changer. . . ."

In 2015, Massachusetts ranked second nationally per capita in deaths from synthetic opioids like fentanyl, which can be up to 50 times stronger than heroin. But Massachusetts is far from alone. Between 2014 and 2015, nationwide deaths involving synthetic opioids tragically rose 72 percent.

That is why I partnered with Representative BRIAN FITZPATRICK to introduce the INTERDICT Act, which would provide U.S. Customs and Border Protection with enhanced chemical screening devices and scientific support to detect and intercept synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

I thank Representative FITZPATRICK and our Senate counterparts for their

partnership, and I urge all our colleagues to support the INTERDICT Act.

To effectively combat the nationwide opioid crisis requires a comprehensive, cooperative, fully funded effort. The INTERDICT Act would be a powerful tool in eliminating synthetic opioids from the equation.

KAPPA DAY ON THE HILL

(Mr. CLAY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, more than ever before, we need leaders from across the Nation to raise our voices, elevate our awareness, and come to Washington, as stated in the First Amendment, to petition the government for a redress of our grievances.

Now, more than ever, we need the people most affected by the decisions that are being made in this hallowed place, the people's House, and at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to make sure that this representative government is indeed being held accountable for both its actions and inactions.

On this special day, I am proud of my brothers in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and I am honored to welcome them back to Washington for their annual visit.

I stand with my brothers to ensure that we never forget how our decisions on issues like health care, education, housing, jobs, voting rights, and even the use of military force are more than just political or policy judgments. They have life-and-death consequences for real people in the communities that we represent and across this great country as well.

I thank my Kappa brothers for their steadfast friendship, support, and devotion to advancing freedom and equality for every American.

KAPPAS ON THE HILL

(Mr. CONYERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, during the annual James "Biff" Carter Kappas on the Capitol Hill Legislative Policy Conference. I knew Biff Carter personally.

Each year, Kappas from all over the country flock to Capitol Hill to raise awareness around the key issues that are affecting our communities. These men are leaders in religious, business, legal, academia, and community service institutions, as well as others.

Mr. Speaker, I have committed my life to public service for over 52 years. I have been honored to serve my constituents in this esteemed body. But one of my proudest moments in public service is when I committed myself to a life of honorable achievement in